

Forgiveness Like God Does – Micah 7:18-20, Col 3:12-13

The Treasure that is Your Life in Christ #9

Introduction – Too often we think of mercy as a passive, resistible offer from God rather than a powerful and active work of God for us. Mercy is a characteristic of God, and He will have mercy on whom He will (Exod 3:19). This mercy is the center of the New Covenant as the forgiveness of sins. A person who forgives others is therefore a person who more deeply understands and enjoys the treasure that is his life in Christ.

The Mercy of Forgiveness (Micah 7:18-20) – God delights in mercy and when He grabs us with that mercy, He pardons our *iniquity*, He passes over our *transgression*, and casts all our *sins* into the depths of the sea. We saw these three words last week (Psalm 32:3-5) and noted the distinction of *sin* (missing the mark), *transgressions* (rebellion), and *iniquities* (a perversion or twisting, as of the image of God in us). The particular mercy Micah is talking about is the forgiveness of sin. In this mercy, His righteous anger is appeased, His forgiveness is something in which He delights, and God proves that He is a covenant-keeping God, keeping His promises with Abraham and his descendants.

Now plenty of gods pardon sins, but always at a cost from the one seeking the pardon – which really isn't a pardon, but a wage earned. A god may be just, but he must then require the sinner to justify himself. Or a god may justify a sinner, but then he would not be just to his own standards. Only in Christ can God be the One Who is just and the One Who justifies (Rom 3:23-26).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Centrality of Forgiveness – Forgiveness is the reason Jesus received His name (Matt 1:19-21). Forgiveness is one of the two main characteristics of the promised New Covenant (Heb 10:16-18). Jesus came for messed up people who needed forgiveness (Matt 9:12). He came to give forgiveness (Acts 5:31) and forgiveness is why we preach Jesus (Acts 13:38). Forgiveness is the end result of being transferred from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). Forgiveness is the result of redemption through the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14).

And so, your life in Christ is a life of forgiveness – the mercy of God by which He delights over you. In Christ, your forgiveness is complete and total. There is nothing between you and God, there is no asterisk by your name in the Book of Life. All of your sins have been trampled, drowned, and cast as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Mercy Like God Does (Col 3:12-13) - In your home, in this community of the church, in relationships with other believers, consider these commands – you who are the elect (i.e. the forgiven) of God. How often do you need to put on tender mercies? How often must you be kind? How often must you choose to put on love? Now consider some tougher ones: how often must your demeanor be one of humility and meekness?

Longsuffering – And what does longsuffering look like? “*bearing with one another*” (notice the ongoing nature of the participle), “*and forgiving one another*” (notice the ongoing nature of the participle). Longsuffering is just that – long and suffering.

Even As Christ Forgave You – “*if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*” Our tendency is to receive forgiveness standing under the Niagara Falls of grace, and extend forgiveness, with tight-fisted hands, scrupulously checking to see if “he really meant it,” and reluctantly giving a tea spoon of the stuff. Jesus built this problem into the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:12, 14-15). You do not want your prayer to sound like “Lord, doubt the sincerity of my confession the way I doubt his, keep a hidden tally so that if I sin in this area again You can throw it all in my face, keep an attitude of put-offishness towards me like I do towards her.”

Christ - grants forgiveness immediately, and so we should do the same. Jesus came to seek the sick, not the healthy. He came to forgive sinners for their inexcusable sins. He was looking to extend forgiveness, not looking to see if He could find it in His heart to forgive. “*even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*”

Christ forgives our sins fully and completely, no matter how wicked the sin was. Trespasses against us are always much smaller in ratio than our trespasses against the infinite, perfect, holy God of heaven. “*even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*”

Christ does not put us in a state of probation or purgatory. Christ does not put us in a period of testing to see if we really mean it. He restores us each time we confess our sins to full fellowship with Him. “*even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*”

Christ does not stop forgiving us, even when we sin again and again. How many times have you been forgiven for the same sin? “*even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*”

Forgiveness and Salvation by Grace Alone – How is Matt 6:14-15 consistent with salvation by grace alone? If you refuse to forgive your brother, you are not failing to earn your salvation (you never did earn it). You have sinned and it is inexcusable. You have some confessing to do. What's really happening when you refuse to forgive your brother is that you have revealed that you really do not have a deep understanding of the treasure that is your life in Christ, of what salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone really is. To confess your sin and to forgive your brother's sin – that is to rediscover and enjoy that treasure – to find satisfaction in Christ alone Who is your all.